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CTF PROVIDE COMFORT INCIRLIK AB TU

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADANA 0290

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY DESTROYS PKK'S ZALEH CAMP -- AGAIN

¶1. (U) THE TURKISH PRESS REPORTED ON MAY 19TH THAT TURKISH F-16S AND F-4S HAD AGAIN BOMBED THE PKK'S ZALEH CAMP IN NORTHERN IRAQ, AND BOASTED THAT THE CAMP WAS "RAZED TO THE GROUND."

¶2. (C) THE TAF HAD PREVIOUSLY BOMBED ZALEH CAMP ON JANUARY 29, AND AT THAT TIME CLAIMED THAT HUNDREDS OF PKK MILITANTS WERE KILLED. HOWEVER, THE PKK WAS WARNED OF THE JANUARY RAID, ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE ADVANCE NOTIFICATION GIVEN TO IRAQI KURDISH LEADER JALAL TALABANI WAS PASSED ON TO THE PKK. AS A RESULT, DESPITE TURKISH CLAIMS OF HUNDREDS OF CASUALTIES IN THE JANUARY RAID, CONSULATE RECEIVED CREDIBLE REPORTS FROM THE AREA THAT PUT THE NUMBER OF FATALITIES AT A FRACTION OF THAT, PERHAPS AS LOW AS 10. AT ANY RATE, THE PKK QUICKLY RECLAIMED THE CAMP AND MOVED BACK.

¶3. (C) THIS TIME, THERE WAS NO WARNING, AND THE TAF CLAIMS OF HEAVY PKK CASUALTIES MAY BE MORE ACCURATE. SECONDHAND REPORTS COMING OUT OF NORTHERN IRAQ INDICATE THAT AS MANY AS 100-200 PKK MILITANTS MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED IN THE RAID. INJURED MILITANTS WERE REPORTEDLY BROUGHT AS FAR AS DAHUK HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT, INDICATING THAT FACILITIES CLOSER TO THE CAMP SITE MAY HAVE BEEN OVERLOADED.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: CONSULATE HAS BECOME EXTREMELY CYNICAL ABOUT OFFICIAL CASUALTY FIGURES RELEASED AFTER LARGE OPERATIONS LIKE THE AIR STRIKE AGAINST ZALEH CAMP, OR THE RECENT CROSS-BORDER OPERATION. IRRESPECTIVE OF THE TOTAL CASUALTIES, HOWEVER, SUCH STRIKES MAY FORCE THE PKK TO CHANGE ITS TACTICS, SCATTER ITS MILITANTS INTO SMALLER OPERATING UNITS, AND STOP CONGREGATING IN LARGE CAMPS THAT ARE EASILY RECOGNIZABLE AND HARD TO DEFEND FROM AIR ATTACKS. END COMMENT.

WAAREN